

it was a ridiculous error, but I am not sure whether the spirit was not only right, but one too little met with. To be ready and capable to take up the duties their elders may be forced to lay down is to be "well educated," and to do so willingly is to make old age a well deserved rest of mind, as well as body, for those to whom we owe so much.

As a type of the child who is "dragged up," we have before us the redoubtable *Babs the Impossible*. The authoress has spared her heroine all the consequences of her ignorance of life, but then Cadenhouse was one of the better type of men. To know themselves, physically, morally, and mentally, is the first lesson we must teach our children, and to blink at ugly possibilities is to make them probabilities.

We shall all probably, very shortly, be going down to the sea, if not in ships, at least where ships can be seen—is there any study more fascinating than the rigs and destinations, mast flags or funnel bands of our sea-farers? *The Ship—Her Story* is rather recondite, but it would increase tenfold the children's pleasure during their sea-side holidays if we could, by studying it or any other book, tell them something of the ships which pass—too often for them—in the night of ignorance.

Ah me! This column was originally intended not to be "wholly professional," yet "education" has smuggled itself into every sentence—so often we cannot look out of the window because we must follow the motions within our own room.

CRITICAL READING CLUB.

THE Secretary—Miss A. Pennythorne, Sunnyside, Rawtenstall—regrets deeply that owing to nothing having been definitely arranged before the publication of the last number she has not received as yet any names of members, nor any suggestions as to books. It is surely not possible that there are no students who are anxious to join, but it is only too probable that few have grasped the fact that the Society exists. The rules are—

- (1) Each member to send, on receipt of *L'Umile Pianta* for the quarter, three names of books which she might wish to have chosen for future reading.
- (2) To read the books named in the current number of *L'Umile Pianta* (or if this is impossible to substitute two others).
- (3) To send before the 15th September next, a post card (on which the views and criticisms of the sender are written) to the Secretary.

A selection of post cards from a similar club are published below in order that all may see the sort of thing intended.

An essay on the subject chosen will also be written for each number of the *Pianta* wherever possible by the chooser of the given book or books.

The books chosen for the summer term are—

- (1) *Napoleon—The Last Phase*. Lord Roseberry.
- (2) *Virginibus Puerisque*. R. L. Stephenson.

Post card criticisms on which the Secretary will be glad to receive any time between now and September 15th. Such post cards as may be thought of general interest will be published in each successive number of *L'Umile Pianta*.

POST CARDS.

Crown of Wild Olive. Ruskin.

These lectures are, like all of Ruskin's, somewhat discursive. They are on Art and Political Economy. His views on Art are more practical than on Political Economy, which are often Utopic and unpractical. He is always

dogmatic and drives his points well home—they are worth remembering. He has a curious faculty of seeing the whole of a subject, and then being diverted to one aspect. It is this, I think, which gives the feminine vein which is sometimes apparent in his writings. The style ever a joy, is here at its best.

The True Path. Ruskin.

In this work Ruskin has proved without doubt that he was a true artist, a born artist in feeling, though his artistic imagination found no vent in pictures but in writings. His advice to the working men of Manchester and Bradford may have been inspiring and ennobling but was surely rather above their heads. The lecture on "The Work of Iron" is intensely interesting. Never before had I realized how much of the beauty of Nature is owing to iron. What an intense dislike Ruskin shows for iron railways! His paragraph on the good labourer who does everything he ought is a piece of most perfect sarcasm. Yet quite true, for Ruskin is right, too much is expected from the poor.

Obita Dicta. Birrell.

Delightful volumes in wit, their literary acumen, and the charm of the mind they reveal. There is such an absence of opinionativeness and such a kindly atmosphere in them, that even where he may think some literary fetish of his own, underrated by the author, he need not resent it. Neither, one thinks, would the writer criticise! Mr. Birrell's shafts of wit and gentle laughter must surely be as good as most men's praise.

Obita Dicta. Birrell.

The title of this book and the tone in which it is written are ludicrously at variance. *Obiter Dicta* (gratuitous opinion) stalks abroad with head erect, and a self-assertiveness which borders on the tyrannical. The first volume is superior to the second, as being much more interesting in matter as well as more racy in manner, but the style throughout is very brilliant, racy, and original. Like all literary critics Mr. Birrell, of course, has his likes and dislikes, but his trick of comparing one writer with another, in order that by black-washing his non-favourite, his favourite may appear all the whiter, is detestable and contrary to all canons of criticism.

B. B.

THE SEASIDE IN SUMMER.

NATURE NOTES.

"Oh what an endless work have I in hand,
To count the sea's abundant progeny!
Whose fruitfuller seed far passeth those on land,
And also those which woune in the azure sky!"

So Spenser wrote long ago, and many who have not the poet's powers of expression have also felt, when on a visit to the seaside, that the myriads of objects clinging so abundantly on the rocks or cast so lavishly on the shore defied all attempts not only to enumerate but even to classify them. The aspiring conchologist or marine botanist may be encouraged by the thought that the veriest tyro has a good chance, if he uses his eyes, of discovering some new example of animal or vegetable life at the seaside.

However carefully any portion of cliffs may have been examined, the frequent fracture and constant wearing of the surface leave fresh parts yet unstudied, and of whatever geological formation our cliffs may be they contain hidden objects of great interest. But this is not all. There is an outward beauty conferred on them too. Many cliffs and coasts are rich in soft grasses and luxuriant flowers. Some of them indeed are found nowhere save on the sea coast. Such a plant is the Samphire (*Crithmum maritimum*) whose green tufts hang high up on several of our seaside cliffs. It may be recognized by its clumps of sea-green foliage, varied in August by clusters of little pale yellow flowers. The tallest stalks are usually about a foot in length and it is a member of the *Umbelliferae*.

Hanging like tresses down the rocky sides we may often see the green trailing stalks of that little plant the Sea Spurrey Sandwort (*Arenaria marina*). It is very succulent, its stems about as thick as twine, its leaves of semi-cylindrical form, as sharp pointed as a needle. Small, reddish, lilac, star-shaped flowers grow here and there between the leaf and